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## Echoes from the Field.

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Notes from Alameda, Cal. Townsend's Warbler has been seen by me but once here, in winter.

Oct. 26.—Audubon's Warbler has not occurred commonly this fall. Five birds in a flock were noted near San Lorenzo, Alameda Co., on Sept. 21. Very few noted here this fall and rarely seen in spring migrations in the high plumage.

Noted a Yellow Warbler, Oct. 25.

Very few pairs of Lutescent Warbler; a few years ago a tolerably common breeder. Are annually noted in many of the primeval copes about town, and I doubt if any now remain through their nesting period.

In Contra Costa Co., March, 1899, took a nest and set of Hutton's Vireo in a scrub oak heavily draped with moss, which was also the principal composition of the nest. The notes of one of the birds caused me to stop my team and it took but a few seconds to detect the nest, on a side hill a few yards off the road. The horizontal limb, near the end of which hung the nest, was too light for my weight, so it had to be hacked off with a hatchet, no saw being handy. During the performance the limb tipped considerably, but the incubating bird remained on the nest until I began to haul in the limb. This trait is common with the Warbling Vireo and occasionally with Anna's Hummingbird, the Rufous and the Allen's being very wild in proportion.

Oct. 13. Heard what seemed to be a Western Meadow Lark twittering, and it also sounded like the Olive-sided Flycatcher. Upon approaching an apple tree I detected a California Shrike singing. The notes were low and very sweet and sung several times. At my advance from my position of observation, the Shrike uttered its characteristic, harsh cry and flew, being immediately pursued and attacked by a hummingbird, which appeared to cause little if any annoyance, across a field to a tree 100 yards distant. The hummingbird diverted its course as the shrike was about to alight.

Noted two Tree Swallows skimming over a meadow about Jan. 1. Having seen occasional birds in winter and a large bunch at Niles in January, 1898. Would indicate this swallow to winter in limited numbers in the county.

The migration of Louisiana Tanagers was very light this spring. In the fall they are a scarcer migrant, a few seen almost annually, in sombre plumage.

An instance of three nests of four eggs each of Lazuli Bunting, all situated in bushes on the high bank of a creek in the foothills, all about three and a half feet from the ground and within a few yards of each other, were reported by an acquaintance last spring. Each nest held some piped eggs.

The following curious nesting is reported by the same party:—a set of Plain Titmouse and Ash-throated Flycatcher were taken at successive intervals in 1896 from one hollow, ten feet up in a live-oak on a side-hill. The site was not visited in 1897. The remarks for 1896 apply to 1898. In 1899 the Plain Titmouse was robbed of a set of six eggs on April 15, in a hollow near by. On May 1 and 19, two of her sets were taken from the original hollow which contained a set of Red-shafted Flicker on June 8. On the same date, in a flicker's excavation, five feet from the ground in a dead oak stump ten feet high, standing on a side hill, a California Screech Owl was incubating one of her own and one Red-shafted Flicker's egg. A visit to the nest one week later disclosed the same state of affairs.

On April 29, I discovered a nest almost completed of Black-headed Grosbeak in an apple tree from which I took four fresh eggs on May 9. I made written memoranda of the number of the tree and the row in the orchard and on July 17 was surprised to find a nest and three eggs in the same crotch and am inclined to believe it was the third nest of the two pairs that bred in the orchard.

D. A. COHEN, Alameda, Cal.

**Odd Nesting Sites of Samuel's Song Sparrow.** On the 29th of April, 1898, I found a nest of this species built in the side of a large bunch of driftwood and leaves, lodged in the forks of a willow tree, twelve feet above the ground, on the banks of a stream. The eggs, three in number, were laid in a depression, which was slightly lined with straw and hair, in the side of the mass of driftwood, and were far advanced in incubation. This nest was discovered by seeing the bird leave. Just a year later, upon the 29th of April, 1899, I secured a set of four fresh eggs from a nest which was built in an old nest of the Black-headed Grosbeak from which a set of eggs was taken in 1898. The nest was in a fork near the top of a small willow tree, ten feet from the ground, in a thick growth of small willows near a stream. It was placed in a Grosbeak's nest, and was compactly built of straw, leaves and grasses, lined with fine grass and horsehair. When we consider that this sparrow usually nests in blackberry thickets and thick underbrush three or four feet above the ground, it will be readily seen that the above recorded nests were in rather unusual places.

**Queer Antics of a Western Redtail.** While cultivating in my orchard one warm morning last spring, I was watching a Western Red-tailed Hawk that was passing over. It was flying high, in a north-easterly direction, and flying fast, as if returning to its nest, when suddenly it tumbled over and over in the manner of a tumbler pigeon, directly downward for a distance of about forty feet, then spread its wings and resumed flight. I thought for an instant that some one had shot it, but hearing no report and seeing the hawk continue its journey, I concluded that the bird had, in all probability, been attacked by some small bird or insect and had adapted this manner of eluding it. WM. L. ATKINSON, Santa Clara, Cal.

**Discoloration of Plumage in Certain Birds.** It may be worth while to notice the fact that many birds taken near cities have the plumage greatly discolored. Whether this is due to smoke, ashes, coal dust, or charcoal of burnt stubs I am unable to say. From their appearance it might be any of these agencies. About Denver it may be due to the smelter smoke. As to a certain *Otocoris*, sent to Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., he said: "and 1077 [*arenicola*] is of course soiled with coal dust or some such thing, perhaps from feeding on ash heaps." Near Denver the birds which show the greatest amount of dirt on their plumage are the house finches. Every feather is greatly darkened by the extraneous substance and the red areas are so toned down as to be inconspicuous. In regard to this species I believe Mr. Ridgway has suggested that the birds feed in burnt timber. In the vicinity of Denver, at least, it is rather doubtful if this be the case.

In the same locality *Anthus*, *Lanius*, *Junco* and *Ammodramus* have also been taken with soiled plumages. Coming now to California, we find a smoky plumage in *Ammodramus*, *Thryomanes*, *Anthus* and *Zonotrichia*, all taken in the vicinity of San Francisco. Mr. Slevin, to whom I spoke of the matter, said that *Colaptes* hung around the roofs of buildings in Alameda and probably got dirty from sliding on the shingles, a theory which seems quite probable. In his collection he showed me specimens of *Colaptes*, *Accipiter* and *Regulus*, from Alameda, and a *Dryobates* from Aiken, S. C., all very much soiled.

RICHARD C. MCGREGOR, Palo Alto, Cal.

**Brewer's Blackbird Nesting in Cavities.** On April 21, 1895, while at Sargents, Cal., a peculiar nesting site of Brewer's Blackbird was noted. A colony of these birds were inhabiting a small live oak grove on a hill. I was surprised to find one nest built in a small cavity on the under side of a rotten oak limb, about ten feet from the ground. The nest was composed largely of Spanish moss and lined with horse hair. It contained two fresh eggs. The cavity was one such as is generally selected by a Sparrow Hawk in which to build. C. BARLOW, Santa Clara, Cal.

**Sierran Crossbill in El Dorado Co., Cal.** At Fyffe, El Dorado Co., on June 8, 1899, Mr. Carriger and I noted a bird on the low limbs of a pine near the house, which at first glance we took to be a male Cassin's Finch. Upon shooting it, the specimen resolved itself into a Sierran Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra bendirei*, ♂) in rich

plumage. The testes were undeveloped and the bird showed no signs of breeding. This was at an altitude of 3,700 feet, in the forests of yellow pine. For two days after this I saw at different times, flocks of crossbills in the tops of the pines and firs, moving along rapidly and doubtless feeding upon the buds of these trees, but secured no other specimens. They were probably moving up into the high Sierras, although up to this time their migration must have been strictly a northern one, as none were seen or reported west of Fyffe, showing it was then entirely too late for them to be migrating up from the valleys.

C. BARLOW, Santa Clara, Cal.

Occurrence of the American Scaup Duck in Los Angeles Co., Cal. In a bunch of ducks sent me by ex-Governor Markham and shot by him at Bixby, Cal., Dec. 20, 1899, I find a male American Scaup Duck (*Aythya marila nearctica*). This is a new record for Los Angeles Co., and an addition to Mr. Grinnell's list.

F. S. DAGGETT, Pasadena, Cal.

Early Nesting of the Pasadena Thrasher. On the 15th of last month, (December '99,) Dr. Fenyas and myself, while hunting over a brush-covered wash near Azusa, were surprised to find a nest of this species (*Harporhynchus redivivus pasadenensis*). It was in no ways peculiar, except as to the date, being built two and one-half feet above the ground in a black-sage bush. One of the birds was sitting closely and the other singing from its perch at the top of a bush not far off. The nest contained three eggs in which incubation was well begun. The thrashers are always in full song soon after their single annual moult which occurs in August, but they do not ordinarily breed before March and April, though we have one county record for January 27.\*

JOSEPH GRINNELL, Pasadena, Cal.

An Unusually High Nest of Audubon's Hermit Thrush. Mr. Belding's note in the March-April BULLETIN for 1899, on the nesting of the Audubon's Hermit Thrush (*Turdus aonalaschke auduboni*) in the Sierra Nevadas, brings to mind the only set of eggs of this bird I have seen. We were near the summit of the Sierras on the 6th of June, 1896, and while looking around in a grove of trees, I noticed a nest well out on a pine limb, thirty feet from the ground. On climbing the tree, the bird was seen upon the nest and flew off when closely approached. The nest is strongly built of twigs and bright yellow moss (*Evernia vulpina*), with a layer of fine dry leaves, within which is a heavy lining of fine grass stems. The nest contained four fresh eggs. The height from the ground seems unusual as compared with other records, but it was perhaps to get the benefit of the morning sun, as patches of snow lay all around and the nights were quite chilly. Several birds were heard or seen between 7,000 and 8,000 feet in El Dorado Co., and several heard singing in the Merced grove of Big Trees a couple of weeks later.

R. H. BECK, Berryessa, Cal., Dec. 20, 1899.

Notes from Haywards, Cal. In some notes published in the *Nidologist*, Mr. D. A. Cohen of Alameda mentions that the Hermit Warbler (*D. occidentalis*) was reported seen in 1885 at Berkeley. My records extend back to March 4, 1880, when two males were shot in live oaks on the north hillside at Haywards. I find among my records the taking of a Black-throated Gray Warbler (*D. nigrescens*) on Oct. 14, 1882, and another seen on May 11, 1883. I also have a male Myrtle Warbler (*D. coronata*) taken April 13, 1881, the only specimen ever noted here.

I shot a male and noted two other Red-breasted Nuthatches on Oct. 14, 1882, the only time I observed them. A California Creeper (*C. familiaris occidentalis*) was observed in the live oaks on Feb. 2, 1890, being rather out of its range as it is restricted to the redwood and pine regions. On Dec. 8, 1885, a cold, wet, windy day, I noticed several Californian Chickadees (*Parus rufescens neglectus*) feeding among the cypress trees, which is the only time they were seen. They were no doubt common years ago, before the disappearance of the redwoods from the hillsides and canons. A female was taken at Dry Creek Aug. 1, 1896, and the species may breed on this side of the bay shore.

W. OTTO EMERSON, Haywards, Cal.

\*Birds of the Pacific Slope of Los Angeles county.